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Fling Fred Morrow
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ON THE
FRENCH REVOLUTION

BY
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PREFACE

THE evolution of history teaching from the stage characterized by the memorizing of a text to that distinguished by a critical study of evidence forms one of the most interesting chapters of the pedagogic history of the past twenty-five years. The steps in this evolution were: (1) The addition of "library work," collateral reading in secondary histories; (2) the preparation of a topic based upon secondary works; (3) the use of the sources as collateral reading; (4) the interpretation of documents and narrative sources, little or no attention being paid to criticism, namely, to localization, evaluation, independence, and the establishment of the fact by the agreement of two or more independent affirmations. A single source was sufficient, the main purpose in dealing with narrative sources was to get the contemporary color and sentiment; (5) preparation of a paper based indiscriminately upon sources and secondary works, no attempt being made to distinguish the two classes of material or to use the sources critically; (6) finally, a study based upon a collection of sources, dealing with a limited topic
and containing two or more affirmations by independent witnesses to the same fact. Here for the first time history teaching had reached a scientific basis. The use of collateral secondary reading, although tending to break up the practice of memorizing and to give a fuller knowledge of the topic studied, supplied neither the material nor the method for scientific historical training. Later, the reading of the sources supplied the material; but, as they were not studied intensively and critically, nor more than one source used for the same fact, the indispensable method was still lacking. Nor could the preparation of a paper, even when based upon sources and secondary works, yield that discipline so long as the primary importance of the sources and the fundamental character of source criticism were not understood or were not made a vital part of historical instruction. Up to the present time the chief aim—practically the only aim—of the instructor has been to interest the pupil and to aid him in obtaining historical information. This certainly is important, always will be important, but it cannot be the sole aim of history teaching. Should not an educated man or woman know something of the process by which historical truth is distinguished from fable or falsehood? Should they not understand something of the logic that underlies historical synthesis and justifies a synthesis in history different from that in the natural sciences? Should